

him when it is dark. I will make up a pack, and within an hour we must go. If Hauck comes to your room before then, or Brokaw, kill him with the knife, Sakewawin! If you don't, they will kill you!"

Her voice broke in a gasp that was like a sob. He struggled to rise, stood swaying before her, his legs unsteady as stilts under him.

"My gun, Marge—my pistol!" he said, trying to reach out his arms. "If I had them now—"

"They must have taken them," she interrupted. "But I have Nisikoo's rifle, Sakewawin! Oh—I must hurry! They won't come to my room, and Marcee is—perhaps dead. As soon as it is dark I will unlock your door. And if one of them comes before then you must kill him! You must! You must!"

She had backed to the door, and now she opened it and was gone. A key clicked in the lock again, he heard her swift footsteps in the hall, and a second door opened and closed.

For a few moments he stood without moving. She had not been in his room more than a minute or two. She had been terribly frightened, terribly afraid of discovery before her work was done. On the floor at his feet lay the knife. That was why she had come; that was what she had brought him! His blood began to tingle; he could feel it a little in his numbed legs and arms. He leaned over slowly and picked up the weapon.

The chanting of Wapi and his people was only a distant murmur. Through the high window came the sound of returning voices—the voices of white men!

There swept through him the wild thrill of the thought that once more the fight was up to him. Marge O'Doone had done her part. She had struck down the Indian woman whom Hauck had placed over her as a guard—had escaped from her room, freed him, and put a knife into his hands. The rest was his fight. How long before Brokaw or Hauck would come? Would they give him time to get the blood running through his body again? Time to gain strength to use his freedom—and the knife?

HE began to walk slowly across the room, pumping his arms up and down. His strength returned quickly. He went to the pail of water and drank deeply with a consuming thirst. The water refreshed him, and he paced back and forth more and more swiftly, until he was breathing steadily and he could harden his muscles and knot his fists.

He looked at the knife. It was a horrible necessity—the burying of that steel into a man's back or his heart! Was there no other way, he wondered? He began searching the room. Why hadn't Marge brought him a club instead of a knife, or at least a club along with the knife? To club a man down, even when he was intent on murder, wasn't like letting out his life in a gush of blood. And there was nothing in the room, nothing—

His eyes rested on the table. In a moment he had turned it over and was wrenching at one of the wooden legs. It broke off with a sharp snap, and he held in his hand a weapon possessing many advantages over the knife. The latter he thrust in his belt with the handle just back of his hip. Then he waited.

It was not for long. The western mountains had shut out the last reflections of the sun. Gloom was beginning to fill his room, and he numbered the minutes as he stood with his ear close to the door, listening for a step, hopeful that it would be the girl's and not Hauck's or Brokaw's.

At last it came, advancing from the end of the hall. It was a heavy step, and he drew a deep breath and gripped his club, and his heart gave a sudden mighty throb as it stopped at his door. It was not pleasant to think of what he was about to do; and yet he realized, as he heard a key in the lock, that it was a grim and terrible necessity. He was thankful there was only one. He would not strike too hard, not in this cowardly way—from ambush; just enough to do the business sufficiently well. It would be easy—quite. He raised his club in the thickening dusk, and held his breath.

The door opened, and Hauck entered, and stood with his back to David. Horrible! Strike a man like that—and with a club! If he could use his hands, choke him, give him at least a quarter of a chance— But it had to be done.

IT was a sickening thing. Hauck went down without a groan—so silently, so lifelessly, that David thought he had killed him. He knelt beside him for a few seconds and made sure that his heart was beating before he rose to his feet. He looked out into the hall. The lamps had not been lighted—probably that was one of the old Indian woman's duties. From the big room came the sound of voices.

And then, close to him, from the door across the way there came a small, trembling voice:

"Hurry, Sakewawin! Lock the door—and come!"

For another instant he dropped on his knees at Hauck's side. Yes, it was there in his pocket—a revolver! He possessed himself of the weapon with an exclamation of joy, locked the door, and ran across the hall. The girl opened her door for him and closed it behind him as he sprang into her room. The first thing he noticed was the Indian woman. She was lying on a cot, and her black eyes were leveled at them like the eyes of a snake. She was trussed up so securely and gagged so thoroughly that he could not restrain a laugh as he bent over her.

"Splendid!" he cried softly. "You're a little brick, Marge! And now—what?"

With the revolver in his hand, and the girl trembling under his arm, he felt a ridiculous desire to shout at the top of his voice.

In the gloom the girl's eyes shone like stars.

"Which—was it?" she whispered.

"Hauck."

"Then it was Brokaw who went with Wapi. Langdon and Henry are with him. It is less than two miles to the lake, and they will be returning soon. We must hurry. Look—it is growing dark!"

She ran to the window, and he followed.

"In—fifteen minutes—we will go, Sakewawin. Tara is out there in the edge of the spruce. Did you—kill him?" she breathed.

"No. I broke off a leg from the table and stunned him."

"I'm glad," she said, shivering. "I'm glad, Sakewawin."

IN the darkness that gathered about them he held her close and told her in a low voice what he had learned from Brokaw. She grew tense against him as he continued, and when he assured her there was no longer a doubt her mother was alive, and that she was the woman he had met in the train, a cry rose out of her throat. She was about to speak when loud footsteps in the hall made her catch her breath.

"It is time," she whispered. "We must go!"

She ran from him quickly, and from under the cot where the Indian woman lay dragged forth a pack. In the dark he could not see what she was doing; but in a moment she put a rifle in his hands.

"It belonged to Nisikoo's," she said. "There are six shots in it, and here are all the cartridges I have."

He took them, and counted them as he dropped them into his pocket. There were eleven in all, including the six in the chamber. "Thirty-twos," he thought, as he sized them up with his fingers. "Good for partridges—and short range at men!" He said aloud: "If we could get my rifle, Marge—"

"They have taken it," she told him again. "But we will not need it, Sakewawin," she added, as if his voice had revealed to her the thought in his mind. "I know of a mountain that is all rock—not so far as the one Tara and I climbed—and if we can reach that they will not be able to trail us. If they should find us—"

She was opening the window.

"What then?" he asked.

"Nisikoo's once killed a bear with that gun," she replied.

The window was open, and she was

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